

## Ticket To Work And Work Incentives Improvement Act Of 1999

President Clinton signed the *Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999* on Dec. 17, 1999. This new law:

- increases beneficiary choice in obtaining rehabilitation and vocational services;
- removes barriers that require people with disabilities to choose between health care coverage and work; and
- assures that more Americans with disabilities have the opportunity to participate in the workforce and lessen their dependence on public benefits.

The provisions of the law become effective at various times, generally beginning one year after enactment. They are described below.

### Expanded Availability Of Health Care Services

Starting Oct. 1, 2000, the law expands Medicaid and Medicare coverage to more people with disabilities who work.

States may provide Medicaid coverage to more people who are still working. States may permit working individuals with income above 250 percent of the federal poverty level to purchase Medicaid coverage. This provision creates an experiment in which medical assistance will be provided to workers with impairments who are not yet too disabled to work. To find out if this provision is available in your state, call the state Medicaid office in your area.

The law expands Medicare coverage to people with disabilities who work. It extends

Part A premium-free coverage for four-and-a-half years beyond the current limit (39 months) for Social Security disability beneficiaries who work. To apply for the expanded coverage, you must have exceeded the current limit.

### Establishment Of The Ticket To Work And Self-Sufficiency Program

Starting early in 2001, Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) disability beneficiaries will receive a "ticket" they may use to obtain vocational rehabilitation and other employment support services from an approved provider of their choice. The program is voluntary. The program will be phased in nationally over a three-year period. Effective Jan. 1, 2001, individuals will not need to undergo the regularly scheduled medical reviews while they are using tickets. However, benefits could be stopped if their earnings exceed the substantial gainful activity limits (\$700 a month).

### Expedited Benefits

Effective Jan. 1, 2001, when a person's Social Security or SSI disability benefits have ended because of earnings from work, he or she would be able to request reinstatement of benefits without filing a new application.

Beneficiaries must be unable to work because of their medical condition. They must

file the request for reinstatement with Social Security within 60 months from the month their benefits are terminated. In addition, they may receive temporary benefits—as well as Medicare or Medicaid—for up to six months while their case is being reviewed. If they are found not disabled, these benefits would not be considered an overpayment.

## Disability Reviews Postponed

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As stated above, effective Jan. 1, 2001, an individual using a “ticket” will not need to undergo the regularly scheduled disability reviews. The following year, Jan. 1, 2002, Social Security disability beneficiaries who have been receiving benefits for at least 24 months will not be asked to go through a disability review because of the work they are doing. However, regularly scheduled medical reviews could still be performed and benefits could be terminated if earnings were above the limits.

## Work Incentives Advisory Panel

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The law establishes a Work Incentives Advisory Panel within Social Security, composed of 12 members appointed by the President and Congress. The panel is to advise the Commissioner and report to Congress on implementation of the ticket program. At least one-half of the panel members are required to be individuals with disabilities or representatives of individuals with disabilities, with consideration given to current or former Social Security disability beneficiaries.

## Work Incentives Outreach Program

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The law directs Social Security to establish a community-based work incentives planning and assistance program to disseminate accurate information about work incentives. Social Security will establish a program of grants, cooperative agreements or contracts to provide the availability of protection and advocacy services, and outreach.

The law also directs Social Security to establish a corps of work incentives specialists within Social Security offices.

## Protection And Advocacy

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The law authorizes Social Security to make payments to protection and advocacy systems established in each state to provide information, advice and other services to disability beneficiaries.

## Demonstration Projects And Studies

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The law extends Social Security disability insurance demonstration authority for five years. Under the law, Social Security is required to conduct a demonstration project to test reducing Social Security disability insurance benefits by \$1 for each \$2 that a beneficiary earns over a certain amount.

The implementation date for this demonstration will be announced.